
The MCA Advisory

The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America

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What's New on Our Website!

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE EVERY MONTH

www.medalcollectors.org

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**January 12, 2008, membership meeting at
the New York International Show. Time: 12
noon. Speaker: Ira Rezak on: A Century of
Medals and Still Counting: Anniversaries of
the Jews in America.**

From the Editor

Who do we, the Medal Collectors of America, want to be when we grow up? The Board has been wrestling with this question and John Sallay has been designated to gather your input. The menu of opportunities for us is truly mouthwatering.

Thanks to Ben Weiss, our webmaster, and ye editor, we have solid platforms from which to communicate. The recent Congress put on by FIDEM demonstrates the great things that a dedicated few can accomplish. Whether it is the artistic dimension of medals (à la Fidem) or the historical or the topical, there is enough scope in our branch of the hobby to interest anyone. The issue really is whether we will choose to pursue our specialties or whether we will take a more catholic view of medals recognizing that, whereas, we cannot collect everything, we can still be actively interested in and promote most of it.

Ye editor is grateful for the burgeoning flow from a roster of talented contributors. Never content, we would like a volunteer to step forward to give us a regular column on auctions, past and prospective. We would like another volunteer to author a regular column on museums we should visit. Finally, and much more specific, who would like to construct a modern census for the Castorland jetons described so eloquently by Ron Guth? There is much to be done and many hands make light work.

Webmaster Report

(Ben Weiss)

Much new material has recently been added to our MCA

Website. (www.medalcollectors.org)

Comprehensive and annotated lists of Bibliographic Material related to medal collecting have been added to the MCA

Website. They have been compiled by Sam Pennington and your Webmaster and contain information for purchasing the books (Sam's list) and annotated reference material broken down into different categories of medal collecting (Ben's list). The lists can be found by clicking the Link *Recommended Reading* on our Website.

Links to several Medal Collections that are currently on the Internet and which may be of interest to medal collectors have been added. They can be reached by clicking on the new Link *Medal Web Sites* on the left bar of the site. If any of our readers know of important medal collections that are not currently on this list, please let me know.

Links to a number of Medal Organizations important to medal collectors have been added to the MCA Website. They can be reached by clicking on the new Link *Medal Organizations* on the left bar. Again, anyone knowing of organizations devoted to medal collecting that are not on this list is urged to contact me at: ben@benweiss.org

Best wishes,

Ben

Commodore Perry's Gold Medal— how it came to Auction Still a Mystery

(by Samuel Pennington)

In 1856, merchants of Boston presented to Commodore Matthew C. Perry a 63mm gold medal in token of their appreciation of his services in negotiating the treaty with Japan signed at Yoku-Hama, March 31, and with Lew Chew at Napa, July 11, 1854. The medal was struck in 1856 at the U.S. Mint on request and was paid for by the Boston merchants. One gold medal was struck, along with twenty silver medals and 104 bronze medals.

On Monday, August 27, 2007, Commodore Perry's gold medal was sold along

with its raggedy original case for \$165,000 (including a 10% buyers' premium) to one of ten phone bidders at Bruce Gamage's auction in Rockland, Maine.



Commodore Matthew Perry's gold medal in its original case.



Reverse of Commodore Perry's gold medal.

The medal is designated PE-26 in *Medals of the United States Mint: The First Century 1792-1892* by R.W. Julian, reprinted and updated in 1977 by The Token and Medal Society.

Julian describes the source of the image on the medal: "According to material on display at the United States Naval Academy Museum in Annapolis, Horatio Greenough prepared a bas-relief of Perry's head based on a photograph. From this bas-relief, Mitchell executed the pair of dies. The original photograph upon which Greenough did his work is on display at the museum."

James Cheevers, Senior Curator at the U.S. Naval Academy Museum in Annapolis, Maryland, told us the academy had an extensive collection of Perry material and was planning a major loan to Japan within the next two years. He said the museum had a bronze version of the Perry medal and would have liked to own the gold version but didn't have anything near the funding to compete at the auction.

The \$165,000 price far exceeded the most ambitious presale estimate of \$30,000 to \$40,000 posited by serious buyers. According to auctioneer Gamage, the buyer was a collector from New York City who wishes to remain anonymous. The underbidder on the floor was New York City coin and medals dealer Anthony Terranova.

Another dealer who requested anonymity said he was out at the \$40,000 level but would have sold the medal to a customer in Japan had he been successful.

Not that it mattered in the end, but Gamage said he had weighed the medal on a gram scale and gave that weight and the size to one of the phone bidders who determined that it contained at least five thousand dollars worth of gold. Gamage also took the medal to a local jeweler, but did not do any potentially destructive acid testing.

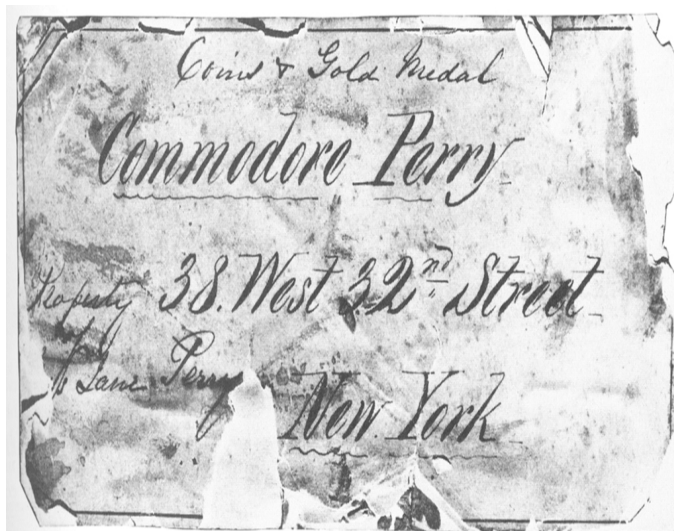
Gamage originally said the medal was consigned on behalf of a Long Island estate. He

later told *Antiques and the Arts Weekly* that the medal came from a local summer family. The Camden-Rockport-Rockland area in Maine where the sale took place has long been host to many high end old money vacation homes.

The author pressed Gamage to find out how such an important medal ended up in a small Maine auction but he replied, “The family really wants to remain private about the medal, it had been sitting in a drawer for years and they thought maybe I could get some money out of it for them, not having a clue that it was worth anything of that magnitude ! A few thousand maybe. As you know I didn’t know that it would bring that kind of money, but I did feel it was gold so I started doing some research, but as the auction drew close I was having the feeling it could bring 30 or 40 thousand but wasn’t sure.”

There was no information at the auction as to how and when it left the Perry family, but a Bowers and Merina catalog from the January 5-6, 1995, sale of the Matthew C. Perry Collection offered a few tantalizing clues.

Commodore Perry was a coin collector. Many of his coins were collected in his travels around the world. Many of the others in the sale were collected by his son-in-law, the banker August Belmont and his heirs.



Label of box containing Commodore Perry’s coin collection. Note reference to gold medal at top. Black

and white photo courtesy Auctions by Bowers and Merena.

Lot 631 in the 1995 sale was listed in the catalog as, “Commodore Perry’s wooden box, with label, in which his coins were handed down from generation to generation in the Belmont family. The box is, in itself, a very historical bit of Americana, even though it is in a poor state of preservation and is broken in several places, but several of the broken pieces of wood are still included. The box is 15-3/4 inches long by 10 inches wide, by 6 inches high.

“The accompanying label consists of several pieces of paper approximately 6 inches long by 3-1/2 inches high, glued together and then glued to the top of the commodore’s box, although it has since peeled free of the box. Written on the label, in Perry’s handwriting is ‘Commodore Perry/38 West 32nd Street/New York.’ Above this, probably added at a later date, appears ‘Coins & Gold Medal’ (see note below), while ‘Property of Mrs. Jane Perry’ appears at the lower left corner of the label, written in Jane Perry’s handwriting. The label is somewhat tattered.”

The catalog note continues, “The absence of the gold medal (and the absence of gold coins in the Perry Collection) is explained in a letter dated December 15, 1967 (not included in this sale due to its personal family nature) that reads in part: ‘I am shipping you also an old wooden box with a sticker on it in his wife, Jane’s handwriting saying that it is his coin collection and includes a gold medal. I believe he made the bulk of his collection on his trip to Japan, As you know he was in many other places also-all over the world.’ it goes on to say ‘Unfortunately the gold medal is not there and neither are the gold coins. Tantine (an affectionate name for an aunt) confessed to me that she had jewelry made of them and that she thinks [name deleted for personal family reasons] has one,’ The letter ends by saying ‘This is young Perry’s first heirloom from his

great-great-great-grandfather. Love, Dad.’ The present whereabouts of the unique gold medal is unknown to this author (Frank Van Valen).”

The Bowers and Merena catalog also states that “On the death of Matthew C. Perry in 1858, Perry’s daughter Caroline Perry Belmont inherited the coin collection formed by the Commodore. The collection was passed down from generation to generation in the Belmont family, until 1994 (the 200th anniversary of Perry’s birth), at which time it was sold to Elliot Goldman of Allstate Coin Company in Tucson, Arizona, and then consigned to Auctions by Bowers and Merena for public auction sale.” The author was unable to locate Mr. Goldman.

So the mystery continues!

ANA Scores High Marks at FIDEM 2007 (By Donald Scarinci)

FIDEM 2007 was an American success story. The staff of the American Numismatic Association, which hosted the event, extended themselves and created a positive reputation that will last another two decades until the event returns.

The First FIDEM conference held in the United States in twenty years may well be remembered as the best FIDEM conference since London 1992. The exhibit, the catalog and the conference medal highlighted five days of meetings and papers presented to the assembly of artists, mint representatives, academics, museum curators and collectors from around the world.

Delegates from 19 countries convened for the biannual conference on medallic art that accompanied the opening of an exhibit of contemporary art medals containing over 1500 pieces produced since 2004 from the artists of the world. The exhibit will continue on display at the ANA museum and headquarters in Colorado Springs, Colorado until May 2008.

The exhibit catalog and conference medal remain available until they are sold out.

The surprises at FIDEM 2007 did not come from the usual countries, but from places which have not typically had strong overall exhibits—Spain, Germany, Croatia, Latvia, the Ukraine and Australia.

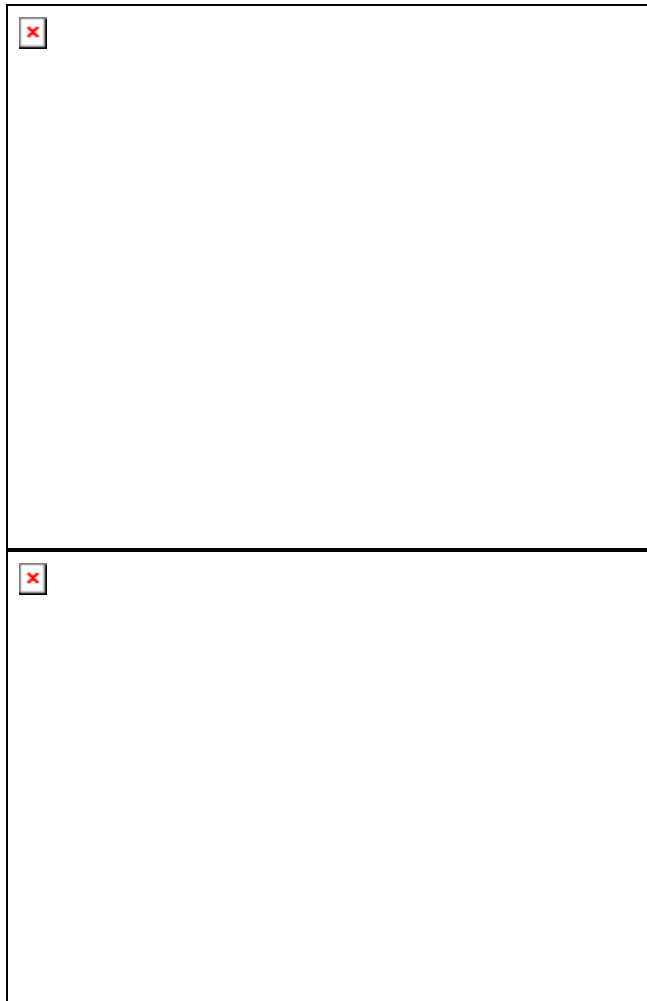
Notwithstanding the absence of new work by Fernando Jesus, the Spanish medals display works of photographic portraiture and delicately intricate realism in a style that seems unique to some of the younger artist of that country. This bears watching to understand whether there is a beginning of a trend in the Spanish art medal or whether these are just isolated occurrences by young artists.

In *Re-Born*, 2006, by Angeles Sanchez Davia, the image of a naked woman sitting in a square container has a powerful three dimensional and realistic quality. She sits comfortably within the confines of four walls yet she is not confined. Her knees and ankles are free of the barrier the edge of the medal creates. Her body is contained within the boundary of the medal but not confined by it. This medal has a wonderful texture which the photograph, unfortunately, does not communicate.



Marisca Vico’s *On the Beach*, 2006 and Antonio Valle Martin’s, *Hanging clothes*, 2005 both use realistic photographic images in focus

against metallic surfaces that are vague and tentative creating a dream image effect. *On the Beach* uses a male and a female figure draped with clothing that places the figures in ancient Rome or Greece while the woman ties her hair back in a very modern style. This creates a feeling of timeless romance and serenity.

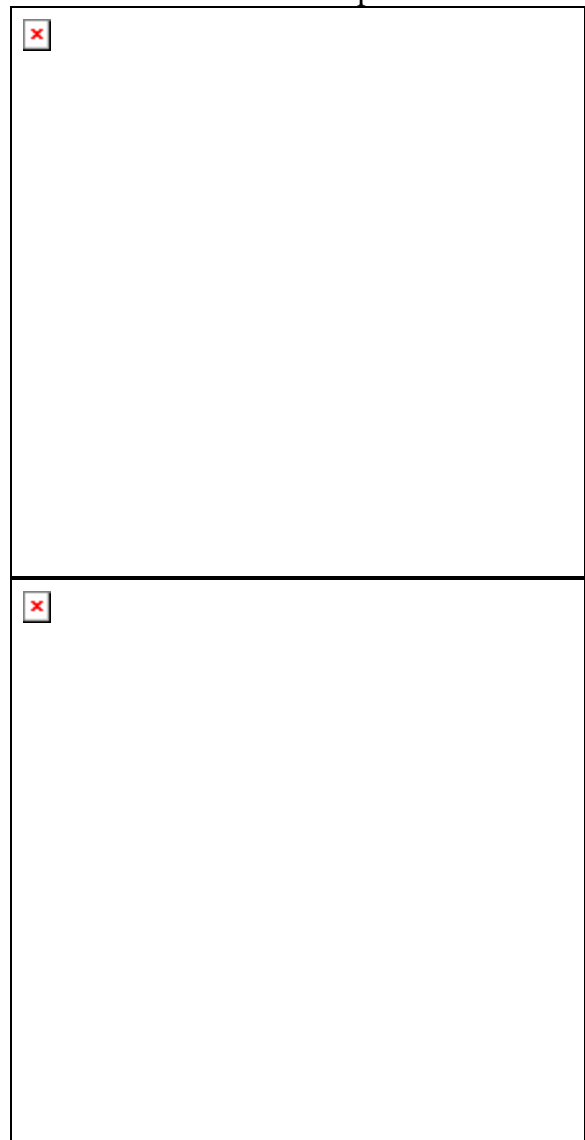


These and other medals from the Spanish exhibit display a new Spanish realism style that emphasizes technical skill and re-invigorates the medallic portrait. It will be interesting to follow this style and some of these artists in the next few years.

Australia had a small but strong group of medals. Michael Meszaros exhibited a piece, *Forestation/Desolation*, that represents a new direction in his work. Collectors are familiar with Michael Meszaros' Society of

Medalist medal, *Staircase*, which uses techniques that are more typical of Meszaros. His FIDEM 2007 medal is a departure toward modernism and a very strong statement about our environment.

In this medal, Meszaros uses the two sides of the medal to show opposites—a lush forest on the one side becoming a desert area on the other side. He chooses a form that creates an impression of mountains and valleys but is at the same time ragged on the edges making the circle of the medal incomplete as if to foretell the future of the planet.



The Royal Australian Mint sent one of its sculptors, Wojciech Pietranik, to Colorado Springs. His Tsunami medal pair, *Calm* and *Execution* were two of the more powerful commemorations of the Tsunami tragedies in the world. Several artists presented medals on this theme.

Wojciech's medal shows the wave, powerfully shaped in bronze, about to crash on the small upright figure of a person who just sits and watches. In the face of such a powerful force of nature, all one can do is observe and accept fate.

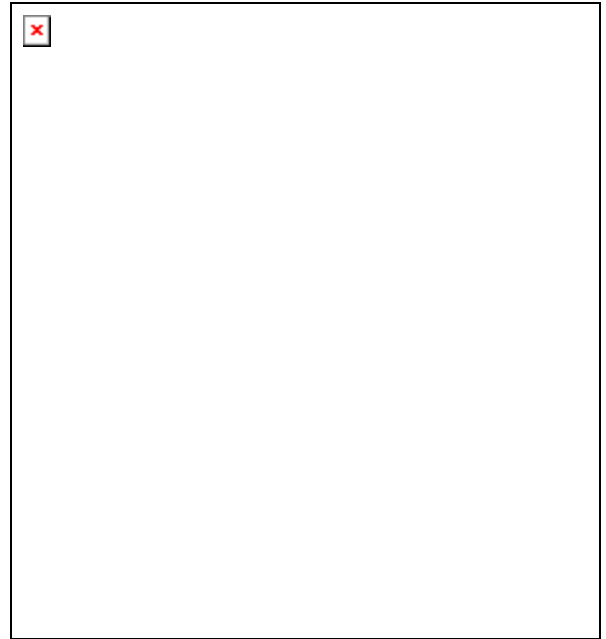
This medal portrays a timeless theme in a timely way. It captures the awe of nature and represents man as small and powerless. The medal is patinated black and penetrates the abyss of the mind as much as the infinite depth of nature's power. Despite our technology and our delusion that we are the masters of the universe, we are powerless to control the forces of nature.



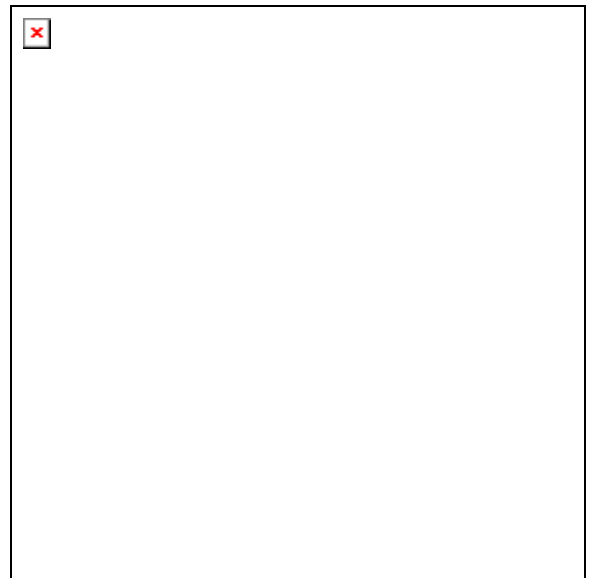
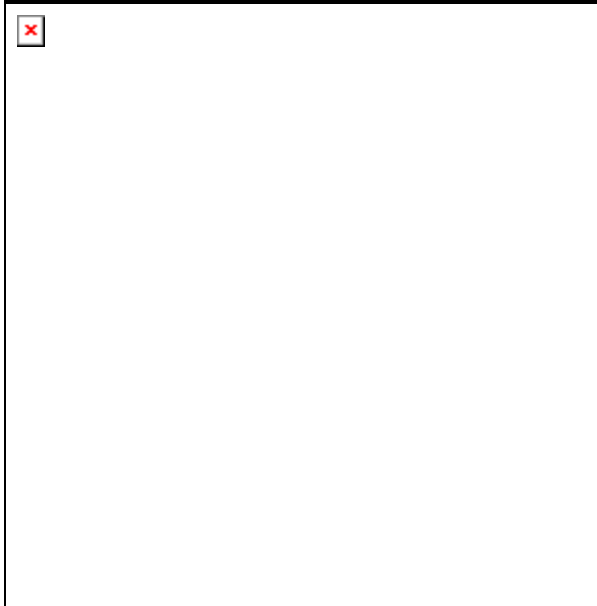
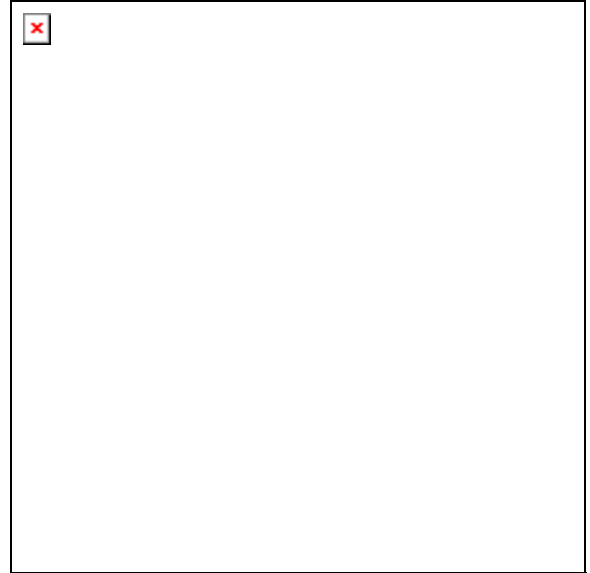
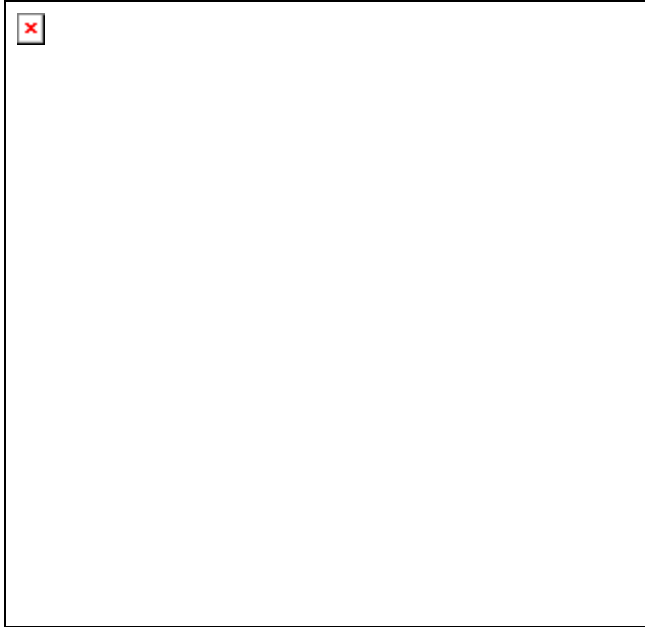
FIDEM exhibits always seem to have strong representation from Poland, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Finland and Portugal. This year was no exception.

While it is impossible to single out medals from just one of these countries, the Portuguese exhibit requires a special mention. Helder Batista won the best of show with four

wonderful medals. In *The wheels of my Toy*, he chooses acrylic and metal to show motion is a way never before represented in a medal.



Even though it has been a decade since he won the Saltus Award, Battista's new medals, *My song shall sow through the world's every part* and *50th anniversary of the Moscavide Church* strongly re-affirms his stature as one of the greatest living medallic sculptors in the world today.



FIDEM delegates were treated to lectures on topics ranging from Stephen Scher on the 16th Century mannerist medal to Jeanne Steven-Sollman's talk on developing an art medal. There were about thirty (30) papers presented which will all be published in the upcoming *Medialles* magazine some time next year.

There were trips to the Air Force Academy's medal collection and workshops on Collage. The dinners included an informal barbecue at the "Garden of the Gods" and a

formal closing banquet at the Broadmore. In short, there was something for everyone and ample opportunity for delegates to socialize with the artists, scholars, world mint personnel and museum curators who are at the forefront of the contemporary art medal in the world today.

[Photos courtesy of the American Numismatic Association and Federation Internationale de la Médaille/Brad Armstrong]

Moy Announces an American Neo-Renaissance at FIDEM 2007

(by Donald Scarinci)

Just as FIDEM 1959 in Weimar signaled the beginning of modernism in world Art medals and FIDEM 2002 in Paris became the final international acknowledgement that the French dominance in the art of the medal has ended, FIDEM 2007 may come to mark the official beginning of the neo-renaissance of American Coinage design.

Edmund C. Moy, Director of the United States Mint, delivered the keynote address on the opening day of the conference and most delegates and participants talked about it throughout the week. It was a powerful speech emphasizing the importance of good art and ending with a new call for artists who are United States citizens to offer their talent to the Mint.

Moy said that despite the restraints of Congress on individual coin and medal designs, “I want to spark a new awakening of excellence in coin design, and embody the American spirit in new and renewed allegorical or iconic symbolism.”

He acknowledged that the bar set by St. Gaudens, Brenner, Weinman and others was

very high, but he announced a new call for the most talented artists in America to help surpass that bar.

“By assembling the right talent, providing the right inspiration, communicating American values and evoking the American spirit, we can spur a neo-renaissance in American coin design,” he said.

The Director talked about his own Mint Directors’ Medal, one of the continuous and unbroken series of U.S. Mint medals produced since the tenure of the first Director of the Mint. He cited the example of the St. Gaudens’ liberty design as an example of a work of art that captures the American spirit at the turn of the century. He said that for the 21st Century, “I would put Lady Liberty on a diet and make her more muscular as liberty at the beginning of the 21st century has a much more muscular and forceful presence in the world.”

“And because I serve a president who believes that liberty is God’s gift to the world and not just western civilization, I recommended a wardrobe change to a gown that was less Greco Roman and more minimalist,” the Director said.

There can be little doubt that something very creative is happening at the United States Mint. Since November 20, 2003, when Henrietta Holsman Fore, then Director of the U.S. Mint, announced her “call for Artists,” competition among the artists and acceptance of new things has been building at the Mint.

At Moy’s direction, John Marcanti was named to the Chief Engraver position which hasn’t been filled since Elizabeth Jones left the U.S. Mint in the 1980’s. Marcanti’s leadership has, so far, been very successful selecting and encouraging new talent and new thinking about the art of America’s coinage designs.

Since Coinage has more congressional restrictions than medals, examine the first two medals in the Moy/Marcanti era:

The reverse of last year’s “Byron Nelson” medal was designed by Don Everhart. The use of the circle creates a three

dimensional quality. The golf ball sits within the circularity of the medal and the golfers swing sits within the circularity of the golf ball. If the medal were struck in some relief, correctly patinated and some minor changes made here and there, which the artist does not control, this would be even more remarkable than it is already.



The “Dr. Norman E. Borlaug” Bronze Medal produced this year by Phoebe Hemphill and Don Everhart is another brilliant piece. Dr. Borlaug, a winner of the Nobel peace prize for his work in agriculture, is engulfed in a wheat field from which he emerges and is surrounded with a seemingly infinite horizon. It is the expanded horizon of food that formed Dr. Borlaug’s life work, here beautifully represented by the artist. The reverse again uses the circle within a circle as a nicely drawn set of hands which holds and supports the earth the way Dr. Borlaug’s work with agriculture support the people living on the earth.



Norman Borlaug (2006) Designed by Phoebe Hemphill (obv) and Don Everhart (rev)



Congress legislates coin and award medal topics and designs. They are pretty specific and often mandate the images and wording that must appear leaving very little flexibility to the artists. With an understanding of these restraints, there can be no question that something new and bold is happening at the U.S. Mint.

Even the most skeptical aficionado of American medallic art and coin design could recognize the sharp difference in quality between the products of the last 18 months and the products of the past. A random sampling of examples of U.S. Mint products since 1976 (see below) clearly demonstrates a shift. Whether

or not this is a sustained trend is too soon to tell, but Director Moy's legacy now depends on it.

The FIDEM conference gathered together artists, world mint personnel, scholars and art medal collectors from nineteen countries. The conference is held once every two or three years since 1937. It is the first time this conference was held in the United States since 1937. Moy's choice of forum to make this speech was as monumental and significant as the speech itself.

I would like to be clear that the artists in the first three medals cannot be blamed for the lack of artistic merit of the medals. I have chosen the first three medals to illustrate the overall lack of attention and concern by the Mint's leadership to the Congressional medals in sharp contrast to the two latest medals. A side by side comparison of these medals demonstrates visually that something at the U.S. Mint has changed and that Director Moy's speech is not just words that every American wants to hear. The results since Moy has been the Director of the U.S. Mint speak for themselves in a very obvious way when you compare the medals.



Brigadier General Charles Yeager Bronze Medal (1975) designed by Sherl Winter (obv.) and Matthew Peloso (rev.)





Vietnam Veterans National Medal (1984) designed by Matthew Peloso and John Mercanti



The White House Bicentennial (2000) designed by John Mercanti (obv.) and Thomas D. Rogers (rev.)



Whodunit and Why? A Suffrage Tale (by Samuel Pennington)

Collectors want to know as much as they can about the medals they own. High on the list of questions are who made the medal and why.

We recently bought a medal from the latest fixed-price catalog of Americana dealer Rex Stark of Gardner, Massachusetts. The medal was interesting and rare enough to buy without knowing the answers to those questions.

It was a 3.5" cast uniface (one-sided) medal marked "New York State Woman Suffrage Party Harvest Week 1916" and signed "AMW." Suffrage material is rare, and suffrage medals are even rarer.

The artist was not familiar to us. As we have written before, there is no central data source of makers and artists. The nearest is D. "Dick" Wayne Johnson's as yet unpublished *Directory of American Artists of Coins and Medals*. So to get more information we sent off pictures and descriptions of the medal to him. We asked who "AMW" was.



Dick's first reply was, "The Woman Suffrage medal is unknown to me. I do not have the monogram AMW in my databank, and there are 228 pages of W's in Peter Falk's directory—far too many to search. The artist is probably a woman and probably didn't do much else in medallion form (or we would have known about her or him!)."

We couldn't face going through 228 pages of W's either but turned to *North American Women Artists of the Twentieth Century: A Biographical Dictionary*, edited by Jules Heller and Nancy G. Heller (Garland Publishing, 1995). As luck would have it, we put our finger on the page of the 28 W pages listing Alice Morgan Wright (1881-1975). Right away, we knew we had our artist. The listing read:

"One of the earliest American modernist sculptors, Alice Morgan Wright was a native of Albany, New York. After graduation from Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1904, she pursued art study in New York City at the Art Students League under Hermon Atkins MacNeil and James Earle Fraser. In 1909, the year her work was first exhibited at the National Academy of Design, New York City, she sailed for Paris, France, where she enrolled in classes at the Académie Colarossi. While abroad she exhibited at the Paris Girls Club (1910); at the Royal Academy in London, England (1911), at the Paris Salon (1912), and at the Salon d'Automne, also in Paris (1913). Also during this period Wright became actively involved in the women's suffrage movement, and, in 1912, traveled to London to participate in a public demonstration. She was arrested and jailed in Holloway Prison with Emmeline Pankhurst. Wright continued to campaign for votes for women in America.

"Returning to the United States in 1914, Wright established a studio in MacDougal Alley in New York, and soon became involved with the avant-garde. Marius de Zayas presented her work at his Modern Gallery in

1916, and, in 1917, she participated at the first exhibition mounted by the Society of Independent Artists. Wright was fascinated by modern dance, and several of her sculptures were inspired by Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, and Vaslav Nijinsky. She maintained her New York City studio until about 1920, when she returned to Albany, New York. By 1930 Wright had ceased to sculpt and exhibit her work. She was increasingly absorbed by animal welfare and became internationally famous for her activist work for the humane treatment of animals. Her sculpture is in the permanent collection of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and the Folger Shakespeare Library—both in Washington, D.C.; the Albany Institute of History and Art, New York; and Brookgreen Gardens, South Carolina."

The entry was signed by Betsy Fahlman.

The next day Dick Johnson wrote that Alice Morgan Wright was, indeed, in his database. He sent a list of her known medals (see sidebar), which did not include the suffrage medal.

But what was "Harvest Week 1916" and why did Wright do a medal for it?

We posted an inquiry to *E-Sylum* (<https://my.binhost.com/lists/listinfo/esylum>), a weekly electronic publication of the Numismatic Bibliomania Society

Sure enough a response came in and we now know, not only what Harvest Week 1916 was but to whom the medal was awarded.

Collector Bob Mueller wrote "As the following article attests, the 'Harvest' was one of workers for the cause." Mueller quoted text from the *Syracuse Herald*, Wednesday evening, November 22, 1916, page 6:

Local Suffragist Is Awarded State Medal

"Mrs. Gard Foster Secured Most Workers for Cause During "Harvest Week"

“Mrs. Gard Foster of this city has won the State medal for securing the greatest number of new workers for suffrage. The announcement was made this morning at the forty-eighth annual convention of the New York State Woman Suffrage party which is being held in Albany. Suffragists from all parts of the State were striving for this honor during the "harvest week" from October 16th to 21st in a concentrated campaign to increase the list of workers.

“Mrs. Foster is chairman of the second assembly district of the fifth campaign district. She came to this city only a few months ago from Auburn and immediately plunged into suffrage work. She is also a member of the Kanatenah club and represented this organization at the annual convention of the Federation of Women's clubs held last week in Rochester.”

Mueller also quoted an excerpt from an article in the *New York Times*, November 23, 1916, page 8, which confirms that the sculptor was Alice Morgan Wright:

“PLEDGE \$300,000 FOR SUFFRAGE

“There was great enthusiasm at the convention of the State Woman Suffrage Party today, when more than \$300,000 was pledged for the work of getting the vote in 1917. Mrs. Ogden Mills Reid, the Treasurer, in asking for funds, called for a sacrifice at Christmas time in giving and receiving gifts. Christmas sacrifice cards, with illustrations by Alice Morgan Wright and verses by Mrs. Alice Duer Miller, were shown and are to be widely circulated...”

“At the morning session of the convention the prize to the woman who obtained the greatest number of suffrage signatures during harvest week was awarded. It was a medal designed by Alice Morgan Wright, and went to Mrs. Cornelia de Zeng-Foster of Syracuse.”

A genealogist e-mailed us and explained that Cornelia de Zeng married Gard Foster, so both articles refer to the same

woman. We also posted an inquiry to the editor of the *Clarion*, the newsletter of the Women's Suffrage and Political Issues Chapter of the American Political Items Collectors (APIC), but her main expert is in Iraq and not due back until December.

For now, we believe we have nailed down the name of the artist, the reason the medal was made, and have learned about one more step in the long struggle to win the vote for women.



Alice Morgan Wright's medal awarded for securing the greatest number of new workers for suffrage during the New York State Woman Suffrage Party Harvest Week, 1916.



Alice Morgan Wright's signature monogram.

Medallic History of Alice Morgan Wright

WRIGHT, Alice Morgan (1881-1975) sculptor.
Born Albany, New York, 18 October 1881.
Died Albany, New York, 8 April 1975.
Fellow: National Sculpture Society.

M E D A L S E R I E S

Pastoral Medal Series:

(1916 ca) Pastoral Medal Number 1 1
Exhibited: Art Institute of Chicago **AE2** (1916) no. 1019
(1916 ca) Pastoral Medal Number 2 2
Exhibited: Art Institute of Chicago **AE2** (1916) no. 1020
(1916 ca) Pastoral Medal Number 3 3
Exhibited: Art Institute of Chicago **AE2** (1916) no. 1021
M E D A L S

1916 New York State Woman's Suffrage Party Harvest
Week Medal,
d/i 1916-? First awarded to Mrs. Cornelia de Zeng-
Foster.
(1916 ca) Seelye (Julius Hawley) College President
Medal
Exhibited: Art Institute of Chicago **AE2** (1916) no. 1022
1920 Self Portrait, Bronze, 5" Signed Alice M. Wright,
T.S.S., 1920
1921 Jordan (Mary Augusta) Medal. MAcO
21-3

Letters to the Editor

Adolph Zukor Medal

Dear Dick

I attach an image of a curious (to me)
medal of Adolph Zukor, made by P. Montana
for the Medallic Art Company of New York,
dated 1937. It is struck in a plated base metal
with a deep rim of 5 lines all around. It is
83mm in diameter and 15mm deep. The back
is hollowed out, as if it were a drop-on lid.
Was it made as a paperweight and is it lacking

some integral part? Or what? Who was P.
Montana? Is it at all rare?

I hope I don't come at you with too
many questions, but I thought the answer might
lie in one of those wonderful boxes I read about
in a recent MCA Advisory!

All best wishes

Daniel Fearon

Dear Dan:

Medallic Art Company did indeed make
the Adolph Zukor Silver Jubilee Medal that
you inquired about. Although the medal is
dated for a 1937 anniversary the order arrived
and was placed into production in 1936. When
I cataloged MAcO's medals I gave it the catalog
number 36-5. (This does not mean it was the
fifth medal made in that year, but rather the
fifth medal I cataloged for 1936.)

For reasons I never learned, the actual
manufacture was subcontracted to a diecasting
firm (name and location unknown). Diecasting
is where hot metal is shot into a mold, water
cooled, and the mold is then opened and the
piece ejected. The composition of diecasting is
customarily white metal because of the low
melting point of these metals. Zinc is ideal, but
other white metal compositions may be used.

This medal is zinc silverplated. Perhaps
the reason it was made this way was a large
quantity required in a quick time, an impossible
deadline to produce die struck medals in such
quantity.

You mentioned the unusual shape --
five rounded rings on a very wide 15mm rim --
with a hollow inside. This medal resembles a
"Mason jar lid" and was indeed called "the
Mason jar lid medal" by MAcO employees as
well as collectors. The unusual edge adds 3/8-
inch to the 3-inch diameter image.

This medallic image was the creation of
Pietro Montana (1890-1978) an Italian-
American sculptor medallist. Born in Alcamo,

Italy 29 June 1890, he came to America as a youth. He was known for his religious medals, his Society of Medalists Issue #55, 1957, and his 12-medal Life of Christ series, 1971-72. He also did an Adolph Zukor Plaque the same year as the 1937 medal in more traditional medallic form (36-32). He was a fellow of the National Sculpture Society, and received two awards from them, the first in 1931 for sculpture and in 1959 for bas-relief. He died six years after his Life of Christ series (6 June 1978), his last medallic creations.

Whether Pietro Montana brought the order for these Zukor medallic items to Medallic Art or Medallic Art commissioned him I do not know. He prepared the Zukor models oversize and MAco made the dies (and struck 400 of the 3 1/2-inch [60x89mm] bronze plaquettes which were also silverplated).

The diecasting firm made 11,883 casts shaped like the Mason Jar lid and shipped these to MAco which silverplated them. Of that number 11,250 were shipped to the customer. The 633 overrun were probably scrapped. This is an inordinately large overrun quantity (but evidence of their low cost once the expensive die mold is made). Usually the number of overruns was no more than twenty for medals produced within the MAco plant for possible misstruck items or finishing rejects.

How this medal was used or mounted remains unknown. I have only encountered the finished medal, never one mounted in any way.

When I was in the medal business, I sold the medal twice (J&J auction 21, lot 1671, and CAL 29:2143). Joe Levine has sold it at least three times in his Presidential Coin & Antique auctions (46:1284, 55:1662, 65:1846). It realized \$29.50 in that last sale number 65. I have no record of the Zukor plaque selling at auction.

The medal is collected for its strange shape as well as for its motion picture film topic category. You Brits call that a "thematic." Dan, I fondly remember when we both worked in New York City in the late

1960s when you were the major domo in the coin and medal department of Sotheby's. We enjoyed many conversations on medallic subjects and I attended an auction or two that you had cataloged. Those were indeed fond memories. I hope the above information is useful for you.

Most cordially,

Dick Johnson

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Dear Dick

I really was not expecting such an essay on facts. This is wonderfully helpful of you and well beyond the call of duty. And fascinating stuff it all is - especially the fact that nobody knows why it was made the shape it was - I'm not sure we had the Mason jar - but I know what you mean. It was 1969 that I was in NY and you were down on 42nd Street (do I hear a musical coming on!). It was a work experience like no other -- 38 years ago -- we must have both been very young!

It's good to hear from you and thanks for taking such an effort on my behalf - it is greatly appreciated.

All the best,

Daniel

[Dick and Daniel are two of the all time greats—ed.]

Query: Edward Bailey Wickes Jr. Medal information sought.

Sam Pennington, Publisher of the Maine Antique Digest writes: "I'm trying to research a medal which is listed in One Hundred Years of American Medallic Art 1845-1945, the John E. Marquess Collection: Edward Bailey Wickes Jr. Medal. 1917 bronze uniface. 3 1/4 inches, 84.7mm, maker unknown

Obv: Right profile bust of Edward Wickes, a baby, with his name above and the inscription "Born Sept 18, 1917" below. Comments: Initialed 'W.A.:'

The edge is marked 'P.P.B. u Co. Munchen Made in Germany.' My questions: Who was Wickes and who is the sculptor? I'll be glad to send a composite picture showing all the features to anyone requesting it. My e-mail is samp@maineantiquedigest.com."

Dear John,

The Ron Guth article on Castorland "jetons" is to be praised. He is correct in stating that a more modern census needs to be done. To get that project started I am submitting for publication a photo of an original silver, reeded edge proof, Castorland piece recently added to the coin cabinet of the Rochester Numismatic Association.

This piece was reportedly handed down in the DuVivier family until it came to direct descendent Charles J. Ricard of Chicago. In 2005 he donated it to the Rochester Numismatic Association. It is a treasured piece in the Clabis collection of over 4,000 items.

I eagerly look forward to the completed Castorland census.

Sincerely,

Gerard Muhl
R.N.A. Curator of Collections



[Gerard has suggested that The Advisory sponsor a modern census for the Castorland medal/jeton. Let it begin with the RNA's example (pictured above) of obverse I combined with reverse A. We can imagine none better than this gorgeous example, added to which this specimen will also serve to illustrate the earliest state of the dies. Two other collectors have vouchsafed us their Castorland holdings, so an interesting population has begun to build. More to come.—ed.]

Good morning!

Re: Hall of Fame for Great Americans Silver Medallions

I found your organization through a web search looking for information on the above medallions.

I have recently come into possession of two hardback display cases containing individual silver medals and I am trying to gather additional information on their origin, age, and value as I am about to put them into my safe but wanted to list them in my inventory.

Of the sites that I got a hit on yours seemed to be the most unbiased in terms of

wanting to promote the collecting of numismatic items.

I have only recently found an interest in coin collecting, primarily through offerings of the U.S. Mint, although I have been gifted with items such as the above from long-time collectors who are getting out of the hobby.

Any information or links you could provide would be most helpful, and I wish to thank you in advance for your time.

Regards,

Ronnie Bement
Houston, Texas

John Sallay wrote a piece for your organization on the Thomason Medallion Bible series.

I wonder if you could tell me how many of the original series circa 1830 were struck and what is the approximate value of one of the original series.

Thank you so much for your effort.

Dr. Herbert A. Goldfarb
hgoldfarb@nohysterectomy.com

Dr. Goldfarb,

I'm not aware of mintage figures for the original 1830's Medallion Bible series. Individual medals come up every so often and generally sell for between \$60 and \$200 depending on the condition and the subject matter of the particular medal. Several sold on eBay earlier this year from an incomplete set and the first batch, with the best designs sold for \$150-300, before the bidders realized there were more coming and that some of the designs are more obscure. By the end, they were bringing in the \$60-100 range, in very nice condition.

A complete in nice condition is extremely difficult to find. I bought a white metal set a few years ago, but I have not seen another on the market either before or since. I'd think that if one came up it might sell for \$5,000 to \$8,000, but that's just a guess.

John Sallay